ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW WITH

SÄNDRA WASHINGTON LINCOLN, NEBRASKA FEBRUARY 27, 2020

INTERVIEWED BY DEBORAH HARVEY

AUDIO FILE #BRVB022720 – SANDRA WASHINGTON

# EDITORIAL NOTE

This document is a rendering of the oral history interview as transcribed by the interviewer from the audio recording. Although effort was made to provide a verbatim transcription, for easier reading of the transcript, verbal pauses, repetitions of words, and encouraging words from the interviewer were omitted. The resulting oral history interview transcript was provided to the informant for review and, if necessary, correction. Ms. Washington made several minor modifications and clarifications to the draft transcript.

For the original interview, please refer to the audio file.

# ABSTRACT

Ms. Sändra Washington describes the course of her career with the National Park Service, beginning in 1990. She briefly describes the earliest studies for Brown v. Board of Education National Historic Site before it was established as a national historic site by Congress and reviews the involvement of various people in those efforts. Ms. Washington recounts how she became the first Site Manager for Brown v. Board of Education National Historic Site. She describes the condition of the building when she first visited it after picking up the keys and her reactions to it. Ms. Washington describes her work setting up a HABS team at Monroe Elementary School in the summer of 1993 and supervising it. She also describes her working relationship with the Midwest Regional Office. Ms. Washington recounts hiring the first Superintendent for Brown v. Board of Education National Historic Site, Ray Harper. She details some of the activities for the fortieth anniversary of the Brown decision in which she was involved at Brown v.

Board of Education National Historic Site. Ms. Washington provides her opinion of what the Brown Foundation was expected to do under a cooperative agreement to aid the park in exchange for its stipend in the park’s budget. She discusses some of the difficulties attendant on managing that cooperative agreement. Ms. Washington describes beginning the planning for the General Management Plan. She briefly discusses some issues regarding the superintendency of Cheryl Brown Henderson at Brown v.

Board of Education National Historic Site, including being on the review panel that hired her and hiring the auditors to review the financial affairs of the Brown Foundation and Ms. Henderson after she left. Ms. Washington also described what she felt were some anomalies with the site boundary and relates some difficulties with the KKK surrounding the site opening. She also chronicles her career after she left Brown v. Board of Education National Historic Site.

# PERSONS MENTIONED

David Given, Alan Hutchins, Linda Brown, Harry Butowsky, Senator [Robert] Dole, Cheryl Brown Henderson, Mark Stueve, [Midwest] Regional Director Don Castleberry, Paul Taylor, Treva [Sykes], Teri Perry [Gage], Randy Baynes, Karen Stohl, Russ Lesko, Jim Loach, Cal Calabrese, Francis A. “Andy” Ketterson, Superintendent Ray Harper, the Little Rock Nine, Deborah Dandridge, Mike Bureman, Jack Greenburg, Terrence Roberts, Gale Hazelwood, Dink [Motham?], Sam Fontain, [President] George W. Bush, Paul Hoffman, [Midwest] Regional Director Ernie Quintana, Chris Bernthal, Director [Roger G.] Kennedy, Gary Candalaria, Rachel [Franklin]-Weekley, David Smith, Bruce Schafer [President] Bill [Clinton].

Sändra Washington, 2020

# ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW WITH

**SÄNDRA WASHINGTON**

Interviewer: This oral history interview is for the Administrative History of the Brown v Board of Education National Historic Site in Topeka, Kansas. The interviewer is Deborah Harvey, with Outside The Box, on behalf of the Midwest Regional Office of the National Park Service. Interviewed today is Sändra Washington, former (and first) Site Manager at Brown v. Board of Education National Historic Site and Midwest Regional Office Project Leader for development of the General Management Plan. Is that correct?

Washington: That is correct.

Interviewer: Okay. The date is February 27, 2020. This interview takes place at the Bennet-Martin Public Library in Lincoln, Nebraska. Now, Ms. Washington, as I’m sure you know, the purpose of an Administrative History is to document the development of a unit of the National Park System, both physically and administratively. Oral histories are one way to get information that might not otherwise be available from documentary evidence. We try to get as much information as we can from as many different perspectives as possible in order to craft a robust narrative of the developmental history of the park.

This document will be used for future park administrators to inform their decisions as they navigate future developments. However, I should inform you that we – not all the information we gather will be included in the final Administrative History. That depends a lot on how the information advances our understanding of park development. But I do want to tell you that we appreciate very much that you are giving your time to share your experiences of the development of the Brown v. Board of Education National Historic Site to further this project.

So, to start with, I’m going to ask you to repeat your name and spell your last name for the transcriber.

Washington: Absolutely. My name is Sändra Washington. S-A – with an umlaut – N-D-R-A. Last name is Washington. W-A-S-H-I-N-G-T-O-N.

Interviewer: Okay. Thank you. Thank you for helping with the spelling. So, we’ll start with your work for the National Park Service and then move on to the specifics of your work for Brown

v. Board. Washington: Okay.

Interviewer: So, when did you first start with the National Park Service?

Washington: I – my first day was either August 26 or August 28, 1990. I – it was an even day at the end of the month – at the end of August and probably was a Monday. (Laughter) But I –

Interviewer: Okay. We can look that up. (Laughter) And what was your first position?

Washington: My first position was Outdoor Recreation Planner. Interviewer: Mmm-hmm. And where?

Washington: In Omaha, Nebraska, for the Midwest Regional Office. Alright? I worked for the Planning program, and it was – it was the Planning program and it was the Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Programs. They were joined in the same Division of the office, and our Associate Regional Director was David Given, and my direct supervisor was Alan Hutchins. And we were a group of people who were outdoor rec planners, environmental specialists, and community planners. My job title eventually moved to Community Planner. There’s no substantial difference in the work that we were doing, but for an Outdoor Rec Planner, you didn’t have to have an educational requirement, and Community Planner, you did, and – I don’t know – my ego got involved. And I thought, “I have these two degrees in Natural Resources Management and Planning and Urban Regional Planning. Maybe I should actually have the title to go with them.” Yeah. It didn’t matter.

Interviewer: Okay. And what – just in general – what did that involve?

Washington: I had two areas in which I worked since we were a combined Planning Division between Interior Planning, so, inside the agency, inside boundaries of parks, and Exterior Planning, community planning with state and local governments, not-for-profits on anything around conservation. So, part of my job, I provided technical assistance and planning assistance to communities around the Midwest, whether it was the State of Nebraska asking us to come in and do something, the City of Chicago parks – Cook County Parks, with some NGOs in Chicago – Chicago River – to have us help them on a river program for cleaning up and revitalizing the river – the Chicago River. I worked in a project in Des Moines, and – on the east side. I worked in Indianapolis on a Greenway Program, planning –

Interviewer: Okay, so, did you work – did you work with parks on – a lot of times, historic buildings are concerned about the surrounding neighborhood. Did you work –?

Washington: That was the National Register program that did that kind of work. I really was doing more – my degrees are in natural resources primarily – and so we were doing recreation and conservation planning work with, primarily, local governments and NGOs.

Interviewer: Okay. I was going to say, this doesn’t sound like you were actually working in parks.

Washington: We weren’t working in national parks, necessarily. Sometimes – so, I did a lot of bike trails and helped communities figure out safe routes. And then, funding and hiring the right consultants for engineering and things like that, conducting public meetings, doing a lot of things like that. And then, the Greenway Program was not just bikeways, but sort of, like, “How would you protect greenways for multiple reasons: for clean water, watershed, flood – flooding, recreation – you know, all of that stuff. And some recreation. So, the Indianapolis Greenway Program was the entire county, and it was – that was fascinating. Chicago River was fascinating. But – so, that was, like, half of the job, and the other half of the job was working inside the boundaries of national parks.

So – but primarily in studies. So, whenever Congress would say, “This would be a great – this might be a great new unit of the National Park System,” the agency took the time, then, to study and determine whether or not it would – actually would make a good unit of the National Park System. So, I was on a lot of study teams where we looked at is the site nationally significant, is it suitable, does it meet some set of criteria for –?

Interviewer: Mmm-hmm. Is there room for parking?

Washington: Is there room – yeah! Is there just – is there room for this? Does it make sense in this community to bring in this? Is this what’s necessary because nobody else can protect it locally or at the state level? And then, is it feasible? Is it something that we could actually wrap our hands around, not just financially – but, can we really wrap our hands around it?

Interviewer: This is called a Feasibility Study?

Washington: It’s called a Special Resource Study. They show up in the – in the files as Special Resource Studies, Suitability Studies, Feasibility Studies, lots of things. But they include three parts. They – well, four parts: a study of significance – national significance – the suitability of it, the feasibility of it, and then some management alternatives. So, is the Park Service – is the national government actually necessary?

Interviewer: Are you the ones who should be doing this, basically? Washington: Yeah. Should we do this, or should – or can somebody else? Interviewer: Or can the state do this?

Washington: Yeah, or the locals. Or whatever. And, if you don’t jump one hurdle – if you don’t clear one hurdle, then you usually don’t move to the next piece. The Brown v. Board of Education National Historic Site was a – sort of grew up from a study. So, the study – and it – and we didn’t start with the – an idea, “Hey, this should be a National Park,” as much as, “This deserves, perhaps, greater recognition. We have a National Historic Landmark in Topeka, situated at the Sumner School, which was the school for all-white children that Linda Brown lived near, and she wanted to – her family wanted her to attend there, but the school that she actually went to school in, the all-black school, Monroe Elementary, was not in the Landmark Designation. It had – I mean, it was like a cursory, you know, whisper, but it was, like, “Wait a second. Maybe we should first start with expanding the NHL to include at least the sister school –“

Interviewer: Sumner and Monroe?

Washington: Yes. Sumner. Monroe. Recognizing, of course, that there were four black elementaries in Topeka. There were, of course, a dozen or more schools for white children in Topeka. But, at least pairing the school that Linda Brown attempted to go to and she went with. And then, when we started to look at that, they said, “Maybe you should do a Special Resource Study,” beyond just expanding the NHL nomination. And, if we looked at the bigger story – what was – you know, we could use Topeka as an object lesson, but the

bigger story included four more cases that were combined on the docket at the Supreme Court.

Interviewer: As I understood from Harry Butowsky, the original reason that Monroe got nominated, I guess, to the National Historic Landmark – as a National Historic Landmark was because he was doing a Special Resource Study on Constitution-related sites. Sites that were significant to the Constitution, and it was one of them, so –

Washington: Yes. So, he was doing a Thematic Study. So, he was doing a Theme Study. And so, there’s lots of things that actually were happening at the same time. Serendipity gets – you know, is played out here. So, he was working on a Theme Study, and I guess it was the Constitutional Theme Study. Oh, I haven’t read that in a long time. Thank you, Harry, for mentioning that. So, Harry was working on that and realized that half of the Constitutional story at – in Topeka wasn’t being told. The Park Service had been approached by Senator Dole for, “Maybe this should be a great place for a park,” but he had been approached by Cheryl Brown Henderson because it had come to her attention that the Monroe School had just changed hands again, and Mark Stueve – (whispers) oh, my God! – of Stueve Construction Company, had purchased the school to be used as a warehouse for his construction company, which was headquartered, maybe, four blocks away, not very far. And he had come in only after the Salvation Army or some group like that had been using it as a food pantry, clothing distribution center – and they’d had a fire. And so, a portion of the building had gone up on the first floor. So, there was, you know, scorch marks on the walls and stuff. He came in and thought, “This’ll be great.” And then Cheryl approached him and said, “Whoa! Whoa! Whoa. This is – this place matters!” And he’s a good guy. And he said, “Okay, this is going to probably cost me a little bit, if you’re asking me to basically stop my – you know, from moving in.”

Interviewer: Was she asking him to donate the building?

Washington: She was asking him to stop and not make any changes to the building. So, basically, hold off.

Interviewer: Oh, not make any changes to the building. So, as a warehouse, that wasn’t going to work?

Washington: No. I mean, he might – you know, and he might [unintelligible – interviewer coughs] some walls or he might, you know –

Interviewer: Yeah, scratch up the terrazzo floors?

Washington: Something like that. And so, she went – (whispers) gosh, did she go? I think she went to the Trust for Public Lands. That part – she’s going to have to clarify the timing of that, because I remember working closely with the Trust for Public Lands because he – they paid his taxes, so he didn’t – he owed – he sold them an option. They bought an option on the building, and they paid his taxes until the study was complete – until the Congress – until the legislation passed.

Interviewer: Okay. Alright, then! So, back to being a planner. (Laughter) What happened after that?

Where did you - what did you do with the Park Service after that?

Washington: Okay. So, after I was a Planner – so, this is where things start to overlap, and I had - held multiple jobs at the same time. So, the legislation passed, and Don Castleberry, Regional Director, said, “Hey! You were on the study team. Hey, you – it’s only a paper exercise. You’ll never have to really spend significant amounts of time there.”

Interviewer: Really? He wanted you to go be the Site Superintendent? Washington: Yeah!

Interviewer: And he said, “You’re- you won’t have to spend significant amounts of time there?” (Laughs)

Washington: Yeah. “No, this is a paper exercise.” (Laughter) “You’ll sign some stuff up there at your desk,” you know, “You won’t have to move.” “Oh. Okay.” So, I believed him and (laughter) said, “Okay, well, tell me what those things are I’ll need to sign if this really is a paper thing.” And he says, “Well, we’ll get somebody hired in. You don’t have to worry about that.” And I said, “All right! Thank you!”

Interviewer: So, you believed you were going to get to stay in Omaha and not go to Topeka as the Site Manager?

Washington: Yeah. I believe that. Yeah. I thought I would sign a couple of things like – sort of as a paper exercise, just to keep things moving.

Interviewer: Because there were no – there was no staff there for you to –?

Washington: No. There was no staff, and the building had not yet been purchased. So, we were – I just thought, “Oh, it’s November. Whatever. I’m going to sign some things at my desk and then whatever.” And so, by January I kind of knew that was – that might have been an empty promise, and by the time I got to the Spring, I realized it was an – absolutely an empty promise. (Laughs)

Interviewer: Okay. So, you absolutely had to go to Topeka and be the Site Manager on site? You weren’t on site.

Washington: Yes. I wasn’t on – so, for a while, there, I would go for a week and come home. I’d go out on Monday morning, come home Friday night. Then I’d go, maybe, for two weeks and come home. And I was staying in a hotel. And I was, like, “Hey, I don’t have a place. You keep telling me this is a temporary thing, and so I guess I don’t need to put down roots,” but then, it was, like, “I probably should join Rotary. I probably should do some things that say that the Park Service is here. Oh, look,” – I can’t remember when I went to accept the keys, but they finally said, “Go to the title office and grab the keys.” And I said, “Fantastic! I’m so glad somebody’s done all of the real estate stuff. I’ll just go down to the title office.” And I picked up, maybe, three pounds of keys. (Laughter) On multiple rings. It was, like, three huge hoops. It was, like, “That’s a lot of keys!” And they put them back into the paper sack and said, “Here you are.” And I said, “Thank you very

much!” And I thought, “Wow!” And they said, “Well, there – this is the padlock to the gate; this is the padlock on the chain around the north doors, and then this is the key to the door.” And I – “Thank you.”

Interviewer: So, there was a fence with a gate around the building at the time?

Washington: Yeah. There was a fence on a – on the parking on the north side. So – and that was the fence around the door. So, it wasn’t around the entire property. So, it was, like, “Okay!” So, you unlock it, then you lock yourself in. Then, you go to the door, and you unlock the chain and padlock, and then you put your big, old key in the building, and then you open the door, and you go, “Alright!” And then I had front door keys, but we didn’t open the front door very often. And – you know, and you walk in, and you go, “Wow!

Interviewer: Yeah. What was your first impression when you first did that? Washington: It was – I was a little scared.

Interviewer: It was scary?

Washington: It was scary. There was a light switch, and I remember it was – it was daytime when I went in the first time, and I – it was a little nerve-wracking. There were some live wires, and I was like, “Oh! Okay. I’m going to treat that as if it’s live.” And then I did find out it was live. There was water in the basement when I came in that first day. The basement was not empty. I remember, like –

Interviewer: Do you remember the approximate date?

Washington: I don’t. It had to be Spring of ’93 – or – ‘93. Spring of ’93. Interviewer: Okay. So, you’re walking into the building –?

Washington: I think it’s – I don’t think it was ’92. I think it passed in ’92 sometime. It was, like, Fall of ’92, so now it’s Spring of ’93. I walk into the building. I remember being a little freaked out because there was water standing in the basement, and there were things that were swimming - and I was, like, “Aauugghh!”

Interviewer: Things swimming? Oh!

Washington: I think it was a rat. And I was, like – (laughter) But I just remember – I just remember yelping, and I thought, “Oh, good. Now I’m screaming like a girl. At least I’m by myself,” you know! (laughter) And I went back upstairs and shut the basement door and went, “Hmm.” (laughter)

Interviewer: So, what about the rest of the building?

Washington: It was fascinating! You know, the office – so there was a wall down on – that way (illustrates direction with hand) – on the front building – front of the building, where you’d had – so, they had the great, little grilled window that’s an office on both sides, and you could – you walked behind it. There was a small room, and then there was the large room, and there should have been a wall to another large room, and it was, like, “Oh, okay. So, those walls are down. That one wall is down.” So, it was a double room

already. On the other side – on the south side of the front door foyer, there was another, small closety-like office, and everything. And that was great because there’s still cubbyholes. And the hallway – the main hall – and so, (illustrating the layout of the building on the table with her hands) the foyer, hall, the entry and then the big T. The building was in great shape. I remember thinking, “The floors are in great shape.” The door – the casings were great. The small water fountain, the bathrooms were in pretty good shape. On –

Interviewer: Mmm-hmm. With those teeny-tiny toilets? (Laughs)

Washington: Yes. But the rooms on the south side of the building, front, had burned. And so, there was some flooring – like a carpet or something – I didn’t feel like it was glued down wall to wall, but some of that was charred. There were lots of plastic – big, black plastic bags of clothing and other things. Some were open, some were scorched, some were melted. The walls were darkened by the fire. It seemed like there was two rooms like that. The gymnasium was amazing! And the balcony. I remember thinking, “Should I? No, don’t go up there by yourself.” You know, “It looks sturdy, but you don’t want to – safety first.

You are by yourself. Try not to do something foolish.” So, you know – and I walked down to the kindergarten room. I think I walked down the first floor, entirely, and I was, like, “Okay!” And I’m looking in classrooms and stuff like that and being fascinated by it. Glad to see that there was the fireplace in the kindergarten room that was similar to the fireplace at Sumner, in the kindergarten room.

Interviewer: Oh, okay. Huh!

Washington: I know! The architect had been – built a lot – a lot – did a lot of schools in Topeka for the school district, and so had a similar style, and they – the schools were laid out – Sumner and Monroe were laid out very similarly, but the ornamentation was less at Monroe than it was at Sumner. And Sumner had a basement that was usable, so they were all – they had a different topography of site, so –

Interviewer: Yeah, I was going to ask if maybe that was because of –

Washington: Yeah. So, their cafeteria was in the basement. And in Monroe, the kids ate in the gymnasium, I think. There wasn’t –

Interviewer: Okay. Because the water table was too high, probably, in the –? Washington: Yeah. It’s pretty high all over Topeka. (Laughs)

Interviewer: Okay. So, once you saw the building, what did you do next? Washington: Oh. I think I locked it up, and I called back –

Interviewer: You called Don and said –?

Washington: (Laughs) I called back to Operations and said, “Alright, I got the keys. I’ve done everything I’m supposed to do. I did a quick – you know, whatever. I’ve secured the building again.” And, you know, I’m probably sitting in my car, going, “What? What’s the first –?”

Interviewer: “What’s the first thing to do next?”

Washington: “What’s the first thing to do next?” I probably went to – I called. I made a couple of calls. I said, “I need some folks, probably, to come down here, take a look. I think we’ve got some live wires.” I met with Mark Stueve – S-T- U-E-V-E, and so I probably went over to his office and talked to him, thanked him so much for caring for the building in the interim. And I don’t know if I saw Cheryl that day or not, but I certainly had had conversations and meetings with Cheryl and Mark before, so I know –

Interviewer: Right. So, looking at the building, you could see that it wasn’t ready to open up to the public.

Washington: Oh, my gosh, no! There was – there was – there was – no, of course not. I remember, I was – Paul and I had a conversation last weekend, and I said, “I remember, when I walked into the” – I mean, it might not have been the first time I walked in, but it was the second or the third time, “and there was a pile of glass” – I might have asked Mark – so, “a pile of six-by-eights or eight-by-eight glass panes, and I said, ‘What’s that for?’ And he says, ‘Window repair. Kids take pot-shots at the windows all the time, and these are –‘” Have you been to the building?

Interviewer: Yes.

Washington: Yes. And you – and they, “Shhhht” (demonstrates throwing something), so, you know, on Monday, I would look around and go, “Oh! Okay!” you know. And I did a couple of them myself until I could find a –

Interviewer: You did them yourself?

Washington: Well, my God, you know. It was fine until I hired somebody to do contracted maintenance on the building.

Interviewer: Okay. Was that your first hire for the site?

Washington: Might have been, yes – to sign a contract for spot labor. Maintenance. It was just – Interviewer: Maintenance on the building. And who was that?

Washington: Oh! (long pause)

Interviewer: I think you mentioned his name earlier?

Washington: No, Paul Taylor, hired later, was an actual maintenance manager, a Park Service maintenance manager that I brought from Lincoln Boyhood National Historic Site

Interviewer: Oh, I see. Okay, so your first hire was somebody who was not with the Park Service?

Washington: Right. So, I did contracting to get one. So, I contracted for somebody to do spot labor, to mow, replace windows, you know, just basic stuff. I said that, “We just – I want it to start to look like somebody cares, and that we’re – you know, that we’re at least getting the place mowed, that we’re at least replacing broken windows.”

Interviewer: Right. Now, Treva said she replaced all the broken windows.

Washington: She did, but – when she got there, but she – I mean – because she – I mean, I – Interviewer: Oh, I see. So, it was a continuous –?

Washington: It was a continuous thing – effort. I wouldn’t doubt that – I mean, there were – on some weekends – on some Mondays, I mean, I’d come in and there were, like, six new broken – breaks, and it was just, like, “Okay! Someone had a great time this weekend just heaving rocks at the building,” you know. But I expected – I mean, it was – the neighborhood was rougher then than it was and it is now. The elementary – the new elementary school had not yet been built. The park across the street to the east was very active with unsavory –

Interviewer: Characters?

Washington: Mmm-hmm. Unsavory behavior. I won’t say characters. But the – behaviors. Paul reminded me that he was doing something at the building, and the police stopped and said, “What are you doing here?” And he goes, “Well, I’m – I work here.” And he says, “You can’t be here after dark! What are you thinking?” And it was, like, “Well, I think I can. I’m – like, I’m originally from Milwaukee. I’m not really afraid of –” You know. It was, like, “Get out of here!” And I just – I remember the police were very, like, “Call us when you go down there. Don’t go down there,” – yeah, “please don’t go down there by yourself.” And I said, “Well, I’ve got work to do, and I will always go –“

Interviewer: So, you contacted the police and told them when –?

Washington: Just to say, “Hi!” I reached out to the local police in the first week, after I had possession of the keys. And I’ve always been –

Interviewer: Or they contacted you and said, “Don’t go down there by yourself?”

Washington: Yeah, and I’m – I mean, by this time I’m making contacts with Rotary and stuff like that. And I remember just reaching out and saying, “Hi,” and, “We bought this. We’re new,” and stuff. And I would walk down the street – I would just walk and visit with people – in uniform, so they would get – but they always called me “Officer,” because they did not understand – they’d never seen a Park Service uniform in Topeka, so it was just, like, “Officer.” And it’s, like, “I’m not a State Patrol Officer, but thank you very much.” (Laughter)

Interviewer: “Okay, fine.” A little comradery, there, never hurt, right? (Laughs) Washington: Yeah. Getting an office – so, I –

Interviewer: Yeah, how did you get the office in the – how did you get the space in the Post Office?

Did you do that?

Washington: I did! (Whispers) How did I do that? I remember looking – wanting to have office space, wanting to be downtown. And Cheryl had introduced me to the postmaster, and I thought, “It’s a federal building.” GSA actually did the paperwork to get me the space.

Interviewer: And, of course, upstairs was where the court was.

Washington: I know! And so, I said, “Do you have any office space?” The gentleman was very nice, and he said, “We do lease offices.” And I said, “Great!” Because I’m trying to figure out how – what’s the easiest way? The easiest way would be to go into a federal facility. You know, fed to fed. We should work that out. And, you know, I realized that the federal court, district court, was there in that building. And I was able to rent – or lease for the Park Service the judges’ offices to the court. So, there was two sets of judges’ offices on either side of the court, and we got a small suite of offices on the – (whispers) I’m coming up to the building – they faced the street. So, they were facing west – so, we were west and north in the building. And, between the judges’ offices that we had and the other was the law library – was their conference room and law library. And that still had all the original casing, and it was just beautiful. And they kept it nice because the Postmaster had his office – (whispers) was it in the building? – in the other suite.

Interviewer: Okay. So, when visitors came to – at – once you opened the Welcome Center, when visitors came, were you able to show them the court and the law library? That was very nice.

Washington: Yep! So, the court – yeah, so the courtroom was there, and, you know – Interviewer: Yeah! So, you had something actual – tangible to show visitors? That’s great!

Washington: Yes. So, we did have the court. And the Trust for Public Land, who had stepped in on the option, also were very helpful to us in providing us a little bit of seed money so that we could clean the court and, you know, kind of, get a plaque and stuff like that.

Interviewer: Okay. So, once you decided that you were the – you were the Site Manager – what’s the difference between a Site Manager and a Superintendent?

Washington: You know, sometimes there is a difference, and sometimes there isn’t. Interviewer: You weren’t hired as a Superintendent. You were assigned as the Site Manager.

Washington: I wasn’t hired as the Superintendent. I was assigned as the Site Manager, but, in actually, there’s not very much difference. Sometimes, Site Managers report to Superintendents. So, if you have a very large park like Yellowstone, they might say – but then you’d sort of like have District Rangers, you know. But sometimes Site Managers are folks who report up to a Superintendent, and, in some places, Site Managers are the Superintendent; it’s the same.

Interviewer: Okay, so is there any difference in the reporting requirements? Washington: Nope.

Interviewer: Like, other than who do you – who you report to, maybe?

Washington: No, I – my – you know, the Chief – the Associate for Operations kept saying, “I’m your boss.” And I’m, like, “No, the Regional Director’s my boss.”

Interviewer: And so, as a Site Manager, you could hire people, or you could poach people from other parks?

Washington: Mmm-hmm. I could poach people. So, we didn’t have – I mean, like, most new parks don’t get budgets. That first summer – so, I picked up the keys sometime in the spring – might have been March – and I knew before we started anything that I could probably only do base stuff. So, like, “How do I lay a foundation?” And so, I asked for a HABS/HAER report. So, I hired a HABS team to come out to document the building. And they were there all summer, so then I had to be there because I didn’t really want to hire a HABS team and then not be there. So, by the time –

Interviewer: And let them go – yeah, you could hardly let them just run amok in the building!

Washington: Run amok! And so, I set up an office – oh, my god, we would never have done – do this now. I was so unsafe. I rented a port-a-pot. I made copies of the building’s keys –

Interviewer: Yes, because there was no water functioning there.

Washington: – and I purchased water, which is, like, a no-go in the Park – in the government. You don’t purchase water. You have to have a reason to purchase a water machine. So, anyway – so I went (laughs) – I found them potable water, I –

Interviewer: This was in the early 1990s, so –

Washington: Yeah, this was ‘93. Summer of ’93. I got them a toilet, potable water, lights, and a table. I got them drafting tables so that they could do their work. So, we had the HABS team there that summer. They did a beautiful job. That gave me company so that I could feel safe, and we went out on the roof a lot. And it was easy to get up to the roof. And I spent more time in the basement. I started to feel more comfortable with the whole building. The water dropped – and you know, it was in the spring, and –

Interviewer: Did you have pest control?

Washington: (Laughs) So that was – that was really interesting, you know. We saw the terracotta tiles that were stored in the attic above the gymnasium. So, there’s a crawl space in the gymnasium – above the gymnasium, where – before you go out on the roof. And, you know – and the – one of the guys – Paul – showed me how these were hand-formed tiles because how they were taped to the worker’s thigh.

Interviewer: Oh, really? Oh!

Washington: Yeah. And, when we had a broken one or so, Paul would take one – Interviewer: I did not know that was how they were formed. That’s interesting.

Washington: (Laughs) Yeah, so – you know. So, it was, like, “Oh, cool! Yeah! Nifty!” So, anyway, I brought Teri Perry and Paul Taylor in on details, both from Lincoln Boyhood. I have to – (whispers) “Sorry, Superintendent.” And then I hired them. I said, “Yeah, they’re detailed, but –” they were the first two, and Teri is a –

Interviewer: So, Teri Perry and Paul Taylor?

Washington: Taylor. Paul in Maintenance; Teri in Administrative Officer. And then it was just, you know –

Interviewer: Yeah. At that point, that’s what you needed?

Washington: Yeah, that’s what I needed. I needed somebody who could help me with the paperwork and make sure that I didn’t make serious procurement mistakes.

Interviewer: Did you get any training from Midwest Regional Office on how to do this?

Washington: No. And I laughed with them, because, I said, “You know, this is the trial by fire.” And the first Special Resource Study team that they had me lead was this – also was in Kansas, western Kansas, and I was thinking, “Okay,” and “Hey, alright. Well, I know how to do research. Research is the easy part. I think I can build a team. I know where – I don’t have a skill, I need to find somebody with that skill.” Al and David helped me find the right people for the team, and I said, “This is great.” So that study team started just ahead of the Brown study team, and one of the gentlemen I had on the Nicodemus study team led the Brown team, and he says, “Hey, why don’t you come over and –,“ you know. So, Randy Baynes, Superintendent at Homestead, assisted me at Nicodemus, and then I assisted him at Brown –“

Interviewer: These are some pretty inter-related parks you were –

Washington: Yes! And so, Randy – thank God, he had a huge sense of humor. He just made things so – and so, I’m sitting there at the – in Nicodemus, leading the public meeting, and I look – I’m like – the crowds are amassing. There had to have been five hundred people at that public meeting. And I turned to Al – my boss, my direct supervisor – and I turned to Randy, who’d been in the agency for twenty-five years, and Russ – can’t think of his name, but he had been, like a Chief Ranger at parks in the West, and the only thing that brought him to Omaha was the fact that he married a woman from Buffalo River, and they both found jobs together in Omaha, and – Karen Stohl and Russ – something – Lesko! And so, you know, Lesko’s been a Chief Ranger, and I’ve got Al, and I’ve got Randy, a Superintendent, and they said, “Alright, go ahead. Stand up and welcome everyone to –“ and that’s like, “Is this trial by fire?” And I remember asking, “This is like trial by fire,“ and they all went (nods head affirmatively). And “I’m the youngest, newest person in this room right now, and you want me to say, ‘Thank you for coming to this public meeting.’” And so, then, to turn around, a year later, and be going, “I am the Site Manager!” It was like, “Whatever!” (Laughter)

Interviewer: (Laughs) But, you had built a group of people you could call on to get further help and advice from. Since you weren’t getting training from the Midwest Regional Office, you kind of got on-the-job training from random staff members?

Washington: Yes! Right. I mean, I did! And, you know – and I called back to Omaha, and I would say, “Hey, I need this, I need this, I need this.” And I would talk to the associates, you know, and say, “Can you please reach down and get me somebody?” Yes.

Interviewer: Was there anything in your background that you think prepared you to deal with this?

Washington: I’m a Girl Scout. I’ve worked for Girl Scouts USA. I was the waterfront director at a camp for a number of years. I was the environmental ed director for GSUSA in Wyoming.

Interviewer: Okay. So, you’re accustomed to leaping in and organizing things you know nothing about, right?

Washington: Yes! (Laughs) Yeah, pretty much.

Interviewer: Okay. Alright. Good. Did the – this is a question that the Midwest Regional Office added to all of our interview guides, and it is: what directions did you receive from the MWRO Directorate, mainly from the Regional Director and Deputy Regional Director over the years? Discuss when you were first assigned to the park – which, we did that – and at different milestones in your tenure. Did they give you directions? They didn’t give you training; did they give you directions?

Washington: Yeah. So, Don said – Don Castleberry – he’s still living. He moved home to Little Rock. So, he retired, like – golly, Ned, I – they offered a buy-out, so you can find that in the records – they offered a buy-out, like, in May of either ’93 or ’94, and I’m thinking, “Are you kidding me?! You put me down in Topeka, and now you’re leaving?” And Don said, “Trust your gut. Follow your instincts. You’re going to do fine.” And I was saying, “Alright.” Dave Given – brilliant man, smartest person I’ve ever worked with, ever – and he would – he just said, “Do the research.” You know, he was just, like, “Just do the research.”

Interviewer: Okay. “Do the research; you’ll be fine?”

Washington: Yeah. “Do the research.” So, he was – he was – he was a real – I wouldn’t say, “stickler” – he was – he was not a “stickler,” per se, but he was – he was thorough. He was a very thorough person. And many people have said, “Does he have a sense of humor?” I’m, like, “Oh, he has a sense of humor.” He does. I mean, sometimes, you know, it’s, like, “Did you see him this morning?” And I go, “Yeah.” And I said, “He was hysterical!” And they said, “What?” I said, “Didn’t you see him laughing?” And they’re like – and I’m like, “Look, you guys –” David is a great guy. He’s super-thorough. He’s just – he would just – he would ask me a question, and then say, “But, why? Why did that start?” And then Al – I could tell Al Hutchins anything. I could ask him any question. And he’d never been a park superintendent, but he was the most politically astute person I’ve ever met. Still is.

Interviewer: Okay, so he could help you navigate those things?

Washington: Mmm-hmm. So, the smartest person, and the most politically astute person, and then Don, who just had bucketloads of, like, “Are you –?” Positivity. “Alright, fine! The two of you” – but, Jim Loach, who was Director of Operations, or – he still is Associate Regional Director for Ops. He was very helpful. Cal Calabrese – passed away – he was called to – he was the Director of the Regional – Midwest Archeological Center, MidWAC, and, you know, he knew a lot about cultural resources. Andy Ketterson, retired, still living – Francis A. Ketterson, Francis Andrew Ketterson, at Omaha. He was a really great mentor. So, between Al and Andy and Dave – and Jim, when I needed something like, “Hey, Jim, I need a Law Enforcement Ranger down here today or next week, or whatever” – all of

those guys, they were just, like, “Oh, yeah, sure.” You know, I don’t know if they just thought, “Oh, sure. Let’s give the young one a little bit of assistance.” But I got no training. All I got was assistance, but that’s not to minimize it.

Interviewer: Okay. So, when you first started working there, we’ve already discussed, kind of, your expectations that this wasn’t a permanent position – how long did you stay? A couple of years?

Washington: Just like two years, you know. And I knew – and I said, “Well, when do I get to come home?” And they said, “As soon as you recruit somebody.”

Interviewer: (Laughs) Oh! So, you’re – they left it to you to recruit a Superintendent? Alright. And who did you recruit?

Washington: I pulled together a pool of people so that they would have a choice, and Ray Harper got hired.

Interviewer: Got hired, okay. So, this pool of people all applied? Washington: They didn’t all apply. I remember, you know – Interviewer: Oh, okay. Some of them applied?

Washington: Some of them applied. But what I didn’t want was to have them show up – and they said, “We really don’t want to just do an open call. We do an open call, we’re only going to get the same people. Can you please find us a diverse – a diverse crowd of people who would be interested in this. We – you know – and –“

Interviewer: Alright. Okay. So, when you first went to the site, how did you – did you think the public was interested in it, or did they know about it at all? What do you think the public’s perception of – other than throwing rocks at it – was?

Washington: Yeah – and I didn’t – I never took those rocks as malice. I took those as kids – whatever. Interviewer: Yeah. Kids playing. Boys playing. (Laughs)

Washington: Yeah. You know, I thought – I think that a lot of folks thought that this was – in Topeka, were, like, “Oh, this is just Cheryl’s thing.”

Interviewer: Oh, really? They thought that, because she’d been involved in trying to be – to get it –

Washington: Cheryl was – is the – Cheryl was absolutely instrumental. She is the one who got Dole. I mean, you know –

Interviewer: Right. And so, the rest of them said, “Oh, well, this is just Cheryl’s thing, and whatever?”

Washington: Yeah. So, the Brown Foundation existed before the park. And she also had a consulting company, not the Brown Foundation, where she did consulting with school districts on equity and diversity. And she’s a teacher by training, so she had – she had a couple of things going already at the school – or around the theme. And I think, for some people,

it was just like, “Oh, this is Cheryl just doing more Cheryl.” And, I’m being – if that’s crass –

Interviewer: Did they ever get it, that it was a large – it was larger than –?

Washington: Yes. And then there were people who really did get that this was a larger thing. There was some, like, trepidation that this was just going to shine a bad light on Topeka. This – that –

Interviewer: Mmm-hmm. Little Rock had that problem, too.

Washington: Yes, they did. I was instrumental in getting that project – that park opened and started and had to recruit the Superintendent for that. So – and then there were some people who were kind of excited, kind of looking forward to it. They really wanted to know, “Will this just be about the Brown family, or will you talk to all the plaintiffs?” And so, one of the bigger things that I did – the most important – more – one of the more important things I did was to really reach out to all the plaintiffs and say, “This is not only about the Brown family. This is about all of the plaintiffs who made up this particular case and all five of the cases.”

Interviewer: Because it’s a national park, so it has to apply to all the –?

Washington: Right. And all five of the cases that went forward on the docket. I said, “So, it’s not just – I know it’s Brown.” Now, Cheryl had taken, I think, as her, sort of, park mentor, the King family of Atlanta. And she wanted something similar in Topeka.

Interviewer: Oh. That was her template?

Washington: That was – that was her template. And so, she did work into the legislation the Brown Foundation for Equity and Equality or – and they did get money – a line item, directly. And –

Interviewer: Right. The Brown Foundation did get –? Washington: Mmm-hmm. Did get a line item – Interviewer: In the budget?

Washington: In the budget, under a cooperative agreement. And it was pulling teeth to get them to sign the agreement.

Interviewer: And what were they supposed to do under this agreement?

Washington: They were supposed to be our educational arm and do a lot of the outreach and education for – and including research and other things that we might need.

Interviewer: Okay, outreach and education. So, they produced brochures and sent them to the schools, or –?

Washington: No. I mean, yes, a little bit. They did some programming. They helped us to sponsor the fortieth. So, the fortieth anniversary of the decision was coming up in ’94, and so they

always did a conference – a local conference – but, this time, the Park Service was going to be present, and I got the Director of the agency to come out to speak on that. We did some other things that I’m very pleased by. I – we did a fish bowl – sort of like an oral history fish bowl for people who represented the Brown case specifically in Topeka and then each of the other cases on the docket, and then the ramifications. So, we involved all five cases – so plaintiffs from all five cases, the attorneys for the NAACP Legal Defense Fund, the State’s Attorney in Kansas, and some of the Little Rock Nine. And we put them all in a room together in that law library.

Interviewer: Where did you do this? Oh, you were doing it at the Post Office?

Washington: At the Post Office in the law library, with a court reporter. And we had a set of questions, and we sat – and I had the General Management Planning team and the Interpretive team – different teams, some overlap – sitting on the outside of the circle. And we had questions that I put forward, and we just listened. For days.

Interviewer: Wow! (Laughs) And so, the Brown Foundation helped you organize this?

Washington: Yeah, and reach some folks, and things like that. We were [unintelligible – crosstalk] – it was all government-sponsored. We – I mean, they were like, “You can.” Like, “I can’t,” and Teri was, like, “Oh, no, we can do travel for, like, twenty people.” (Laughs – unintelligible due to whispering afterwards) Make sure we don’t –

Interviewer: Okay. What – well, the Brown Foundation wasn’t a Friends group. It was a separate organization, and you didn’t have a Friends group at that time. I’m not sure there is one now, so –?

Washington: No. Yeah. And so, there was – you know, there was just some negotiating, “How do we do this?” kind of thing, but it was the most fascinating two and a half days, you know, of my career. I was, like, “Okay, fine. Please just talk amongst yourselves. And we’re just going to listen to you.” And so, listen to the NAACP attorneys and the states attorney, who hadn’t seen each other since they were serving in court, so they – it was just, like, “Wow!”

Interviewer: Wow, that would be something powerful! Washington: It was. It really was. So that was done –

Interviewer: Did the – did Cheryl have direct input into the legislation? Washington: Oh, yeah. She worked with Senator Dole on that.

Interviewer: Okay. Well, I know that Payton, at Tuskegee Institute, had to – had words – let words – information that he insisted on having in the legislation regarding the Tuskegee Airmen National Historic Site, and is that the same situation with –?

Washington: Yeah, she really – she wanted the Brown Foundation in there as – she said the Park Service just doesn’t have the skill set to do this kind of work. And, you know, in 1990, I wouldn’t say –

Interviewer: Did you think that was true?

Washington: I didn’t think the Park Service was, overall, comfortable dealing with civil rights as an active site. Like, how we’re going to talk about it. This is – absolutely! We’re going to talk about race. We’re going to talk about – I mean, all of these things. It’s true, it wasn’t – it wasn’t going to be the easiest topic to enter into, you know.

Interviewer: And, especially when you’re in a town that is hoping you’re not going to reflect poorly on them?

Washington: Yeah. So, I mean – so there was a lot of UUNNHH! You know? But I just – I remember there being a – there being, like, moments of tension when we were talking with the Spencer Collection – Deborah Dandridge and the Spencer Collection – that images that we might want to use were there. And I said, “I know – ”

Interviewer: In the Spencer Collection?

Washington: In the Spencer – and I said, “I understand they’re not ours, but we would like to use some of those images for some of the exhibits.” And she – and there was some concern that people were going to start making donations to the National Park Service.

Interviewer: Instead of to the Spencer Research Library?

Washington: Right. And I said, “You know, I – if someone is insisting that they want to make that donation to the United States, I cannot tell them not to. I can tell them that there is an existing collection being managed here, but I cannot refuse to accept a –“

Interviewer: Right. Okay, did – were you able to get images? Washington: Mmm-hmm. We did.

Interviewer: Eventually they relented?

Washington: Yeah. But it was just – I mean, I think there was the, “What are you going to do? You’re going to step on my turf. What are you going to –?” you know.

Interviewer: “You’re going to take my stuff?”

Washington: “You’re going to take my stuff!” And, when we were negotiating the set of alternatives from the General Management Plan, and we were talking about what the development could be like, and who would be responsible – because it’s not just about how the building gets rehabilitated for use as a Visitors Center, but also about programming pieces.

Interviewer: Yeah. Let’s talk about the General Management Plan. We’ll just move to the General Management Plan. Keep – no, go on!

Washington: Okay. Alright, so – but we would – we were talking about alternatives, and then – and Cheryl would get, like, “Wait a second. That’s our turf. We don’t want the Park Service doing that kind of work.” And I was, like, “Wait a second. This is a national unit, and we have a responsibility to interpret this, and we’re not going to parse out and divide,

‘Well, we won’t talk about any of this because that’s yours to talk about.’” I said, “We have to find a way so we can recognize you in the General Management Plan as a critical partner, a legislative partner, even, but that does not mean that the Park Service Rangers aren’t going to, at some point, get comfortable – have to get comfortable enough to talk about race.”

Interviewer: Right. In – just to interject – in the legislation, they are – the Brown Foundation is a partner for that park?

Washington: Yeah.

Interviewer: Interesting. Okay. So, General Management Plan.

Washington: Yeah. You know, I probably should have gone back and re-read that legislation again, because that’s not actually how it was going to – it played out. So, it was six years ago.

Interviewer: Okay. Well, maybe it was some misunderstandings about what the legislation said? No? Washington: No, I think there was a – eventually, it came home to roost with the Brown Foundation –

their inability to live up to the cooperative agreement that we had signed, to deliver on the cooperative agreement, thinking that it – this was their right to have the money, no matter what. And it’s, like, “Just because it says that you are one of our partners and that the appropriations were set up so that you got money, you – it’s not an absolute right.”

Interviewer: You do have to deliver your half of the agreement?

Washington: Yeah. Because we still have laws. You can’t – this does not countermand all the laws we have around contracts and agreements in the federal government. And the Park Service doesn’t get to write new contracting rules that don’t apply to any other agency of the federal government. We still have these rules, and we still need deliverables. And there was some flexibility, and some easing, and recognizing that this has to be a slow climb; that they’re not an organization that had that level of accounting sophistication. But they needed to.

Interviewer: They needed to develop that?

Washington: Yes. And, where she hand-picked all of the Boards of Directors – and they were all, you know, attached to her. I said, “That’s fine.” I said, “But, when you are doing business with the United States, we need more transparency and accounting. We need deliverables.” And – oh, my God, I can’t tell you how often we had to send someone down to Topeka to provide training in cooperative agreements and Memorandum of Understanding, and what the legal responsibilities were for each party.

Interviewer: Okay. Was that because they changed Board members, or just because they had forgotten the last training?

Washington: Both. Both of those things and just digging in – heels in. And it was just, like – Interviewer: Okay. “Yes, you can come down and train us, but we’re not doing that?”

Washington: Yeah! And she really – she wrapped superintendents – or not – around her finger.

Interviewer: Okay. So, General Management Plan. (Laughter) You were involved with developing the General Management Plan for the park?

Washington: Yep.

Interviewer: And, generally speaking, I know that General Management Plans have three or four alternatives, and you choose a preferred alternative based on your analysis of which one works best. So, when you did the General Management Plan, did you have – what was – what was your team like?

Washington: Mike Bureman was the leader of the plan, from the Denver Service Center. So, we contracted with DSC because we didn’t have a lot of extra people in Omaha to do that. But, I said, “It’s fine. We can go to DSC,” I said, “but we’re not going to get a huge DSC team.” I said, “What I really want is, I want the organization from DSC – so, I want, you know, the editors to be there so that when it’s time to put the pen on paper. That’s just – you guys write it.” And I said, “But we’re going to have people from inside and outside of the Park Service.” I said, “So, we will have Cheryl on the team.” I think Deborah Dandridge was on the team. And you can look at the list of preparers – consultants –

Interviewer: It seems to me like there was a fraternity or sorority on there? Washington: Yeah. Mmm-hmm. I’m trying to think if it was – it wasn’t – Interviewer: Kappa Something?

Washington: Kappas. So, the Kappas – and now I can’t remember why we had the Kappas on there. Interviewer: Oh, drat! I was going to ask – I’ve been trying to find out –

Washington: Why – Cheryl’s a Kappa. I will tell you, she’s a Kappa. She’s the one – Interviewer: (Laughs) Alright. I’ll ask her how the Kappas got on there.

Washington: But it was like, how to – how to make sure that we’re talking to black organizations, organizations that would have, you know, a real hand in this. And so, we did ask the Kappas, but, yeah, if I had – though, if I had to choose, I would probably say that she was a Delta, but she would be [unintelligible] – but she’s probably a Kappa. (Laughs) So, anyway – so –

Interviewer: Okay. So, you had some people from Denver, and then you organized some, maybe, local groups that had a – like, a stakeholder – invested interest in it?

Washington: Yeah, stakeholders. Yeah, and made sure that when we had the document – the document out on review, we did push it out into the –

Interviewer: You put it out into the community?

Washington: Into the community, all the libraries, and then I sent it out to everybody – so, that group of people that I had pulled together for the fishbowl –

Interviewer: The fortieth?

Washington: The - yeah. We sent it out to them. Now, I didn’t expect – this is – that’s the – he was the Dean of the Law School in Columbia, so he’d left NAACP Legal Defense Fund, and he

* at some point in his career, he moved over to be the Dean of Columbia Law School at
* aauugghh! – for the life of me – I meant to pull that book and say, “Yes, that’s his name.” I will get you that. [Ms. Washington later supplied the name, Jack Greenberg.] You may – anyway, so, I sent it to him, and he actually put some review comments in. Terrence Roberts put some review comments in. He was one of the Little Rock Nine. He was at Antioch Law, and he was a Sociologist in – he was really smart. He was, like, a psychologist, sociologist, at Antioch in Los Angeles. [Ms. Washington later corrected that Mr. Roberts was co-chair of the department of Master of Arts in Psychology Program at Antioch College in Los Angeles, California.] He gave some comments. And then I asked Gale Hazelwood, from the Southeast Region – she might have been at King, at the time. I asked her to be on the team. [Ms. Washington later clarified that Ms. Hazelwood was the Chief of Interpretation at Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historical Park at the time.]

Interviewer: Okay. And so, all these people commented and had input into these various alternatives, and you selected a preferred alternative for the management?

Washington: Yeah. Yes. Right. We did. [Ms. Washington later corrected that the plan did not include a set of alternatives. The GMP looked at phases and outlined a set of actions with each development phase. She commented that the park GMP was most definitely done in an old style of planning, without NEPA.]

Interviewer: Was that the most robust alternative – management alternative? I mean, I know that some management alternatives always include a no-action alternative and then gradual increases of additional Park Service involvement in the site.

Washington: Yeah. Right. And we – that’s how – they do the small, medium – and I’m not a huge fan of that, as a planner. I believe that we should be – it shouldn’t be, like, a foregone conclusion. It – but it should take different tactics. So, should we do something that was less focused here and more focused out? Should we – like, virtual reality, kind of – how do we bring in all the other – should we – I mean, we did look at an alternative that looked at small Visitor Centers in each of the cases. So, I mean – so, I really was saying, “No, we’re going to do different things.” We ended up focusing it – the work was focused in Topeka. We did go – and we got pretty detailed on the building because we also knew that this – we weren’t going to have the luxury of having multiple plans happen –

Interviewer: Multiple Visitor Centers?

Washington: Sequentially. So, we had to do a lot of extra work so that we could move forward. So, we knew that the whole building wasn’t going to be the Visitor Center, that we had to have offices here. The Brown Foundation wanted an office in the building. We

contemplated them not being here, at one point. We thought they would be next door, west of us, across the alley. And I think they thought they’d be west of us.

Interviewer: At Dink’s house? (Laughs)

Washington: Yeah. So, we did plan for them to be across the alley, and then the Park Service would take a small place, but – you know. Because it helped us to know, “Do we need to put an elevator in? We do need to put an elevator in, not just for staff but also for visitors because we’re going to do in-house programming with whole school groups.” So, we – so that kind of thing is – was discussed in this GMP. You know, should we be thinking this is a thirty-minute run-through, or is this a – you know, a half a day experience for school students? So, we decided to focus the attention at this building, not to spread our resources out nationally, but to make certain that we covered all five cases equally, that we would have a – large spaces for whole school groups to congregate, and that we would look at the kindergarten room as the only room that might be restored.

Everything else was just rehab, but, within the whole rehabilitated building, we might do a – one restored classroom.

Interviewer: One restored classroom. Okay. Now – so, was that the full Monty, basically, alternative? Washington: Yes.

Interviewer: Okay. Were there things in there that you – in the – in the final preferred alternative that was implemented – that you wished weren’t in there? That you thought weren’t going to be easy to do, or [unintelligible – crosstalk]?

Washington: The relationship with the Brown Foundation ended up being the one that was the hardest.

Interviewer: Okay, and it was part of the General Management Plan?

Washington: But it was also, you know, in the legislation. So, when they came into the building, I remember just going, “Not my tenure. This was somebody else’s decision.” And I just thought, “Alright, that might be a challenge.” At – it was a short moment when Cheryl was the superintendent, and I was not – I remember saying, “You know, she might – but this is her weakness. Everybody remember this is her weakness.” And I said, “We’ve got to put those parameters on her so that she doesn’t step out of line.” And, of course, she did not understand the severity of the parameters. Like, it really should be –

Interviewer: She did not understand, “This is the federal government; we have rules?”

Washington: Right. And when she – when she finally got told, and she – what I didn’t realize – had crafted a – an exit plan for herself. At the moment that she had said, “Yes,” to the superintendency, she went back to her Board and got an exit clause. So, she was supposed to be away from her Board – divorce herself from this, and she got them to sign, like, a non-compete – or, like a non – like, they would not fill – with a real person, so, if she wanted to exit, she got her old job back. (Whispers) Oh, my God!

Interviewer: Okay. Right. She was on leave?

Washington: Yeah. Well, when we found that out, it was, like, “Oh, I’m sorry.” That was – but, it was the right thing. She could not stay as the superintendent because she didn’t want to play by the rules. So, what did I not want? I’d have to look at the GMP again and say, “Was there anything that did not –“ I don’t know that everything got done.

Interviewer: Was there anything that you did want and didn’t get? Washington: (Long pause) I wanted there to be a trail connection. Interviewer: To?

Washington: To the city’s – you know, they have – Interviewer: Oh, they have – they have park trails?

Washington: Yeah – that was – you know, that was a hard one because of the railroad line east of the school.

Interviewer: Yeah. Is that still a railroad line? Washington: No.

Interviewer: So, is it a Rail-to-Trail trail? Washington: Yeah. It was not active at the time. Interviewer: Oh, at the time, it wasn’t? Okay.

Washington: No. They said, “Oh, no. The train’s go down that track, like, once a what? A year, maybe?” I said, “Has anyone looked at the weeds? I mean, I’m just sayin’.” So, I remember just thinking, “That’s ridiculous,” but I wanted there to be that kind of connection. I wanted there to be a more robust relationship between the elementary school and store and the park. Not that there isn’t right now. I don’t know. But I didn’t want – I wanted there to be that kind of synergy between –

Interviewer: Is that the building with the painting on it – with the mural? I don’t know which building is the –?

Washington: To the north – there’s an elementary school just north of the Monroe School.

Interviewer: Okay. So, you wanted a closer connection between the new elementary school and the old elementary school?

Washington: Yeah, and the neighborhood association. I mean, I really wanted there to be, like, “Yeah, this is – we’re not just a national park, we’re also a neighborhood park.” And I really wanted that kind of relationship. I thought the exhibits in most of the building were super-great. I thought the gymnasium exhibits – in the end, the material was great, but the setting did not work. It was – the noise reverberated too much.

Interviewer: Oh, okay. In the gym?

Washington: Yeah, in the gym, where the movie was. It was, like, “Oh, we tried to do this, sort of, Surround Sound kind of thing,” and it was, like, “Whoa! Whoa! Wow!” It didn’t work – the engineering out for the sound –

Interviewer: (Laughs) That’s how gyms are, though. They’re not really acoustically helpful. (Laughs) Washington: Yeah. So, we didn’t – we hadn’t worked out the sound engineering of that, I found out.

But, no, I think the Park Service has done a good job there. And it was – it was what we wanted. We wanted – we got the kindergarten room, we got – as an experiential room – we got some great exhibits, we got a classroom space for student groups. Of course, the Park Service offices tend to grow.

Interviewer: (Laughs) That is something that I’ve noticed about the Park Service: that they need offices and bathrooms.

Washington: Yes. And it seemed that there was some weird thing about a boundary. They wanted to expand the boundary.

Interviewer: Of the park? Into the neighborhood? Washington: Yeah. Just by, like – and – Interviewer: Why?

Washington: They got talked into buying that house that the Brown Foundation was supposed to go into, or – drawing the boundary –

Interviewer: Oh, so the row of houses behind the school? Washington: Mmm-hmm.

Interviewer: The Park Service owns those? Washington: No, just the one.

Interviewer: Just the one?

Washington: And I think we – well, the boundary got drawn around the one. I was just, like, “Oh, my God!”

Interviewer: The boundary got drawn around one of them?

Washington: Yeah. And I just remember thinking, “What have we done?” Interviewer: What did you do with that?

Washington: I don’t know. I’m hoping that we got rid of it. But the boundary would still be there. It’s hard to pull the boundary back. Maybe Park Service put offices in there. Maybe we finally got – told the Brown Foundation to vacate –

Interviewer: Well, I was told one of those houses belonged to a baseball – a Negro League baseball player, Dink Something. I don’t remember his last name. So, I wonder if that was the one?

Washington: Yeah, I don’t know if it was the one on the corner. Maybe it was the one on the corner.

But then the law firm –

Interviewer: Oh, so, that’s not the one that they drew the park boundaries around? Washington: It wasn’t for that reason. It was purely administrative operations.

Interviewer: Oh, okay. To put the Brown Foundation in that building? Washington: Mmm-hmm.

Interviewer: Okay. I wonder what they’re doing with it now.

Washington: Yeah. I’d have to go back and look at all those things again. And that would jog my memory, but – yeah. And then, at the end of the – of my career, I was Associate Regional Director for a gob of crap. My portfolio was just ridiculous. I had Planning and Compliance, Cultural Resources, Line Item Construction.

Interviewer: So, after you left here, you went back to the Midwest Regional Office?

Washington: Yeah. So, I went back to the Midwest Regional Office, and I had jobs as a Community Planner. I was a training manager for a couple of career fields, and I worked for the WASO Training Office. My desk stayed in Omaha. Sam Fontaine was my boss. I did a lot of training at Albright. So, I bopped around at training centers, providing leadership and communication training. Occasionally, you know, in that three-year period, Sam would say, “Yeah, I got a phone call from Dave Given. He says he really wants you to do some community planning at Brown. Check. I’m going to give you ten hours.” And I’m like, “Thank you. Thank you.” So, a quarter of my time was with Omaha; three-quarters of my time was with the WASO Training Office. So, it was just BLEHHH, back and forth, and then I was – became Chief of Planning. And, as the Chief of Planning, I did Planning and Environmental Compliance, Rivers, and National Rivers and Wilderness. And then, as Associate Regional Director, I dropped Wilderness because we hired a – thank goodness, someone who was a wilderness specialist. But I worked in Wilderness, and so, everybody, “Oh, you can do that.” And then they handed me Congressional Affairs and Legislation and Communication for the Region, and, then, sort of, the policy wonk. I was R – I was the Park Service – the Midwest Region’s Representative on the Management Policy Rewrite. So, the debacle that was led by – that was under Bush, the second – the younger, in his first term. Paul Hoffman was the gentleman he hired from the Cody Chamber of Commerce to be the Assistant Secretary of Fish and Wildlife and Parks. And Paul rewrote the management policies, and handed it back to the Park Service, and we were aghast. And I – by this time, Ernie Quintana was our Regional Director, and he said, “Hey, I want you and Chris Bernthal,” from Admin – she was the ARD (Associate Regional Director) for Admin – to go be on the team.” And –

Interviewer: Okay. Stand up for the Park Service? (Laughs)

Washington: Yeah, and, you know, we got two people from the Pacific, and for some [unintelligible] “Blah, blah, blah, blah, blah.” I said, “Okay, we got this! We got this! We got this team!” And we’re, like, sixteen people who would go sequester themselves in a hotel or a set of

offices for a week and write and write and write and research and research and research, and I had a substantial hand in Chapter One, Two, Three, Five, Six, and Eight. And that’s, like, “I don’t know. I don’t know park uses! I am not a Ranger!” And I’m sitting there, and, like, “I want you to do park uses!” “I don’t know park uses.”

Interviewer: (Laughs) Well, but you didn’t know Site Superintendent, either, so there you go. You figured it out.

Washington: Right! Well, I really – nobody from Lands was there, and they said, “Well, take Chapter Three,” and I’m like, “Fine. I’ll take Chapter Three. I can do real estate and land. That’s not a problem. So.”

Interviewer: Well, we have, unfortunately, promised the Library that we would be out of here by – Washington: In about sixteen minutes.

Interviewer: Yeah, in about fifteen – sixteen minutes, so I need to skip to the final questions. Washington: Yes. Okay.

Interviewer: First of all, one of my final questions is: what did you think were the biggest challenges to achieving your goals for the job, but I have a feeling I know the answer to that question.

Washington: You know, the biggest challenge was bringing the park online. Operation – Interviewer: Getting the park online?

Washington: Operationalizing the park.

Interviewer: Getting all the people lined up and doing their job? Washington: Yep. Assuring funding, so that the park could develop. Interviewer: And how did – did you have a budget? How - what did –? Washington: Eventually, we got a budget.

Interviewer: Okay. Did they – did they impact your work in any way? Washington: Oh, yeah. I mean, it was –

Interviewer: Or was it you’ve got a budget, so now you can spend money?

Washington: Yeah. I mean, so – yeah. It was like – I was spending money before, but I was, sort of, like hook and crook [unintelligible – crosstalk]. So, new parks always, in the first year – in the – so, if they – if – so, if – the legislation passed in – I think it was November. So – well, the fiscal year started October 1. We weren’t in anybody’s dream world, and so there was no money, which is why they robbed out of the planning program and said, “You be the Site Manager – it’s free!” So, then, I had to get – I applied – you know, I won the HABS contract. Lands gave me some money because I – well, being the interim [unintelligible – crosstalk] –

Interviewer: Okay, so, different Divisions were contributing money to get this park going?

Washington: Yeah. You know – and I went to the Regional Director and said, “I’ve got to have somebody. I can’t just have – you know, my salary’s getting paid for – by the way, you should probably talk to my supervisor, who doesn’t have me, but they’re paying me, and whatever.” And, I said, “I actually need money – cash. I need cash.” And so, I think – gosh, I think, maybe, there was, like, fifty thousand dollars, forty thousand dollars in that first year. It wasn’t very much at all, you know. And the next year, it was like, “Give us some more money!” And so, it was, like, we got a little bit more money, and I got the funding for the General Management Plan. Well, great. But that’s all allocated. I mean –

Interviewer: Mmm-hmm. Yes. It’s for the General Management Plan. So was that one of the reasons that the park – that the Brown Foundations was doing so much for the fortieth anniversary celebration in ’94 – because the Park Service really didn’t have the money for – to do those things? It certainly was appropriated to do it.

Washington: Yeah. We were – right. I mean, the Park Service chipped in staff for, like, two weeks. And they said, “We have got to make this place at least look like it’s clean.” So, you know, we brought in folks to just, you know, clean the building and make sure that, you know, at least the front façade, all the – all the panes were – all the windows were whole and the front hallway and the gymnasium – everything was mopped, and we had no live wires. I think we had – you know, so, it was like, “Let’s just polish the spit and put some lipstick on this for –”

Interviewer: So people can see this part of it?

Washington: Yeah. But I just – I remember we – the Director, Director Kennedy – you know, we’d finished the banquet – or the luncheon, maybe – or whatever, and he had spoken, and he says, “Oh, if we’re going to do this thing in the afternoon here, I need a place to chill. Where can I chill?” And I remember his aide-de-camp, Gary Candelaria – see, this is why things are so – his aide-de-camp was Gary Candelaria. And his aide-de-camp said, “You know that Director Kennedy likes to nap.” I said, “I’ve heard that he likes to nap.” (Laughter) And he says, “We need a place for him to nap.” And, like, “Can you give me that?” I’m, like, “Yes. I can. Just one moment.” And I took the big pieces of dusting rags you used to use on computer screens, and I laid out, like, twenty of them – because they were large. I laid them all on the floor of one of the rooms that became the exhibit room. And I remember there was stuff shoved against the walls, and I sort of quickly did a sweep and everything, laid these things down, and said, “I have a place for the Director.”

Interviewer: On the floor?

Washington: On the floor! (Laughs) And he took off his flat hat, and I said, “I’ll set it right here.” And I put it, like, on a stack of boxes – found another dust rag – you know, I – and he took off his shoes –

Interviewer: And laid down?

Washington: And went fast asleep. Interviewer: Did Mummy?

Washington: He did Mummy and went to sleep. And I’m, like, “Are you kidding, Mr. Candelaria?” And he goes, “This is perfect.” And I’m, like, “Okay. I’ll – I have some other things to do – [unintelligible – crosstalk and laughter] – this is embarrassing.” But, yes – so, the Brown Foundation stepped up with the luncheon and everything else and got some other speakers besides the Director. (Laughs) And I got a cleaning crew that was involved –

Interviewer: Okay. So – I do wish we had another two or three hours. This is just fascinating! But, I –

Washington: (Laughs) We did have a Klu Klux Klan – I wouldn’t say, “scare.” They were being completely ineffective, but they wanted it to be known that they were present, and so, there – the fence around the north end parking lot was just littered with rolls of – rolls of paper, basically, from the Klan. Gosh, I wish I’d saved – I wish I had saved one of those, because they were just, like, you know –

Interviewer: Rolls of paper from – like, toilet paper? Washington: Yeah. So, it was, like, flyers.

Interviewer: Oh! Like, Klan flyers?

Washington: Yeah. They’d make a flyer, and then they’d roll it up and put it in the fence. Interviewer: They flyered your fence?

Washington: They flyered the fence. And, it was, like, you know, this – “Nigger-loving blah-blah-blah- blah-blah” And it was just like – and my [unintelligible – mumbling] superintendent was like, “What?!” Superintendent – “What?!” And, like – and then, like, they’re trying to take them out, and they don’t want me to see them, they don’t want my feelings to get hurt, and I said, “Stop it. I’ve undoubtedly had more Klan-like interactions than you guys ever have. Give it to me, okay? My feelings aren’t hurt. My feelings aren’t hurt.” Okay. Great. So – and we called the police, you know – and it was just, like, “We have to just – we have to do this.” And I just remember a couple of the officers were like, “Well, are you guys going to, like, shut this down, or –?”

Interviewer: When was this?

Washington: This was May 17th. It was May 17, 1994. And I remember saying, “No, we’re not shutting this down. We’re not changing our plans at all. This is – this is – this is paper. This is nothing.” I said, “These guys – ” I said, “If they were serious about it, they wouldn’t flyer.” I said, “This is as much of an action as we’re going to get.” And I – and the law enforcement guys were, like, “Are you – like, do you want to – a vest?” And I’m, like, “You’re not putting Kevlar on me. I’m in my uniform. No. I am fine.” And – (laughs) oh, gosh! I remember that. That was – what a crazy – and I think I got – did I get hit that day? I’m coming to the park, and I – somebody careened –

Interviewer: Somebody hit you with a car?

Washington: Oh, yeah. Oh, my God! It was just hitting – it was just like – maybe it was the day before. And I was just thinking, “Oh, crap! What a bad stunt!” But I had all these people visiting from other parks – staff – and they were just, like – and it happened right outside the park boundary. And I just remember (makes noises like the sound of brakes squealing and a car crashing), you know. Boom! You know, and then other people, “Superintendent!” You know – and guys are running toward me. And I’m like – I’m like, “I’m fine. I’m fine. I’m fine. I hurt right here, but I’m fine.” It’s like (laughs) the show was going on. We have everybody showing up in two days. It must have been, like, the fourteenth or fifteenth of the month. It was a couple days, and I said, “We’re still going on.” I just said, “We just have to –whatever.” Yeah. Okay.

Interviewer: So, of the things that you’ve done for Brown v. Board, what would you say was your favorite thing that you did?

Washington: You know, the favorite thing might have been – hmm (pause). Interviewer: The thing you’re most proud of?

Washington: Putting the roundtable together of the plaintiffs. Interviewer: Oh, okay. For the – for the fortieth anniversary? Washington: Yeah.

Interviewer: Okay. And what do you – would you say was the most effective thing you did for the park to help the administration – to help it get up and running? Probably what you’ve just been describing about –?

Washington: Yeah. I mean, it just – standing the park up in whatever way. I mean, getting the offices, hiring the best AO I could have hired for the job, negotiating the space in the Post Office, and getting the building on its path – having the HABS study done.

Interviewer: Yeah, you did a lot in two years.

Washington: Yeah, the GMP, [unintelligible – crosstalk] Plan, all those things

Interviewer: Yeah, my experience with a new park – I mean, it’s a miracle if it’s up and running in ten years, what with all the studies that have to be done.

Washington: Yeah, and I did, sort of, jump over those. And, on a personal level, I helped Rachel. I had a historian – I had a park historian.

Interviewer: Rachel Weekley? Washington: Yeah. Boy. Whoo! Man!

Interviewer: So, my last question is: is there something that you would like to talk about that I haven’t asked you about? So, we have seven minutes! (laughs).

Washington: The end of the era. So, the hardest thing I had to do was the end of the era. Now, being on the panel to hire Cheryl – I mean, I was on the interview panel – that was a challenge.

Interviewer: You were on the interview panel for her to be the superintendent? Okay.

Washington: I was. Yep. I was. I interviewed the last three applicants with the team when – and I warned Ernie and Dave that this was her weak – her weak spot. And so, when it came time to, then, explain that you really had to, like, get on board – so, I had the conversation with her in public, with everybody on the board – on the interview panel. Then I had a conversation with her a month or two later about, “You gotta get on board,” you know. And then, when she departed, that was hard. But going through the audit – I had to hire the auditors.

Interviewer: You hired the auditors?

Washington: Yes. So, when we came down to investigate – oh, God! That was the hardest thing I’ve done.

Interviewer: So, the auditors that came here to look at the paperwork, is that correct?

Washington: Yeah. And we had two teams. We had an internal audit team with Bruce Schafer’s office, and then we had an exterior – external audit team. And when Cheryl hauled off and filed a lawsuit against them, you know, I had to walk their principal back, like, down off the edge. I was, like, “We will be behind you.”

Interviewer: So, this was an outside – these were outside firms. This wasn’t a federal –?

Washington: Mmm-hmm. We needed – IE said, “We have to go outside.” I said, “We’ve done the internal stuff. She’s always going to tell us that we’re racist and that our institutional racism was so people – ” And I said, No. So, we’re going to hire – and, if we can, we’re going to hire them off of Section 8.” So we did. So, we hired a team from Los Angeles. It was like, “Let’s get a team from Los Angeles Section 8 GSA.” “Okay, fine.” And still, I was left with, like, “You cannot be telling me the truth. Tell me this is not the truth.” And then –

Interviewer: You’re saying you were astonished at what they found?

Washington: I was just shocked. Yeah. I was so astonished. And the new superintendent that I had hand-picked – so, I had, like – (laughs)

Interviewer: You hand-picked several –

Washington: (Laughs) He was great! He was the best! David Smith – he was so wonderful. But he was just, like, “EEHH! What?!” you know. And he was just, like, “Oh, my gosh!” And we spent hours, nights, going over everything the auditors had done and trying to figure out what was our settlement.

Interviewer: Okay, what your – what you were trying to determine was what they had done with the money that was – had been budgeted to be given to them for the – for what they were supposed to be doing?

Washington: Mmm-hmm. Yes. For lots of things, and they had not delivered. So, what’s our settlement? What’s the cost? What’s the full amount of the abuse, and what’s the appropriate settlement, and then drafting the letters. David would go to the Foundation, and Bruce Schafer, our comptroller – the agency’s comptroller was just (makes explosion noise) “We’re going to see –“ and working the IG’s office. I mean, it was just, like, MMMNNNNN!!! Are we – so, the Inspector General is coming down on us, and it was the worst thing I think I’ve ever been involved in. And then had to write the press statement, and people were just, like –

Interviewer: Oh, really? A press statement for –?

Washington: Cheryl – we knew there was a chance that she’d go public to fight it – to say that we were –

Interviewer: Okay. Because she’d sued?

Washington: Well, she sued the auditors – because that was sort of like an undercurrent. But, when we went to the Board for the Brown Foundation and said, “This is the – these are the misdeeds. This is the cost of the misdeeds. This is how much you owe the United States. And, until you pay this –“ you know. They ignored it, so we sent it again, and then someone’s saying, “How do you find her?” And I’m like, “I know how to find her.” And I said – and this – (whispers) oh, my God! I can’t remember how I did this – because she’s somebody who I considered a friend. I had had dinner with her and her mother. I had all of these things from years ago, where we were, you know – and, like, “I know her boyfriend. And you’re going to go to his house. I’m going to send you to his house because that’s where she’ll be. And we’re going to hand – and we’re going to basically subpoena her with this document, and – because she is refusing to accept. And, until she accepts it, we cannot proceed.”

Interviewer: So, she was refusing to accept the –? Washington: The letter of notice.

Interviewer: Okay, and the letter of notice was for –? Washington: How much the Brown Foundation owed us.

Interviewer: How much the – oh, okay. So, the Brown Foundation, according to the auditors – from the auditors’ audit – they found that the Brown Foundation owed the Park Service money. Okay, not the other way around?

Washington: Yeah. And so it was – it was hard. And then to lock down all federal grants for any organization that she touched. She’s still in lockdown. And so those were the hardest things. I don’t know that we will –

Interviewer: Yeah, I have heard people say that it’s going to be very difficult for the park to recover because of the partisanship that developed in Topeka over this.

Washington: The level of animosity and partisanship – and it’s not just R (Republican) and D (Democrat). This is who’s in Cheryl’s camp and who’s not; who believes that this has been a long time coming and she deserves it. And (long pause) the fact of the matter is that Cheryl has a fair amount of hubris, but she is not, unlike many of us who are successful and have an ego to match our success – her hubris went just a little bit further. And I don’t know if it was a failure on the Park Service’s part to clearly communicate with her what the rules of the road are. I feel like we did our very best in explaining what the rules were. And it did not help that she used the King family as her mentors in this, you know. She looked to them, and they got a lot more than anybody would have ever gotten. And it made me incredibly wary for when the Park Service enters into current history sites with living descendants.

Interviewer: Do you think that the Park Service agrees with you about being wary about that?

Washington: I only – sometimes I don’t think they are. Congress is our biggest – Congress continues to designate sites.

Interviewer: Oh, but Congress doesn’t have to manage the results, so – Washington: No. And Little Rock was less so, though there is a –

Interviewer: There was still a component. (Laughter) I – we actually did the Administrative History for Little Rock, and I did oral histories for that project, as well.

Washington: And sitting there in a room with a whole bunch of movers and shakers in Little Rock and having a Friend of Bill call me a “goddam liar.” And I was like, “Oh, the *Democrat*

*Gazette* is here. The editor is here. Just – (mimes typing on the table) You know, as you – excuse me – tell me that if the Park Service doesn’t do something, that you’re calling the White House, and you – and you step out, and you start talking to the White House switchboard.” And I am, like, “Sir. Sir. Sir. Sir.”

Interviewer: But the White – but the White House didn’t get involved? Washington: Oh, yes, they did!

Interviewer: Oh, they did? (Laughter) Oh. Well, that’s a whole different story and a whole ‘nuther park, so let’s not go there.

Washington: No, we won’t. But, I mean, I am just, like – I’m – I have been around, so – and I’ve been in places where there are people who are descendants, and it makes me wary. It makes me very wary because there is a fine line of the story is so important for all of us to know. The history is important to be preserved. And, yet, there is a mythology that goes with – that goes along, hand in hand. And sometimes we’re going to uncover something that isn’t the truth that you know – or you believe – and you’re going to have to be able to accept that there are multiple perspectives. And as we weave a story for the public, we won’t answer every question, we won’t – we’re not going to get solidified on the

single story line. And that – but, still, your experience is valuable and truthful in its own way. So, it takes a lot more finesse and comfort in the gray zone. And it takes a real people-person to negotiate with love that there will be times where everybody is upset that the truth is not being spoken.

Interviewer: The truth as they believe it? Washington: Mmm-hmm.

Interviewer: Okay. Well, thank you very much. This has just been fascinating. Like I said, I probably could go on for another couple of hours, but the library won’t let us. (Laughs)

Washington: No, they won’t. (Laughs)

Interviewer: I’m going to turn off this recording device.

END OF INTERVIEW